

**PHASE 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT  
PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT  
FAR HILLS HOTEL EXTENSION AND HOTEL SUITES  
PORTIONS 47 AND 50 OF FARM 194 ZWART RIVER  
GEORGE**

Prepared for

**Far Hills Development (Pty) Ltd**

Att: Mr Hennie Steenkamp  
PO Box 1504  
Somerset West  
7130  
Fax: (021) 852 5987

By

Jonathan Kaplan  
**Agency for Cultural Resource Management**  
P.O. Box 159  
Riebeeck West  
7306  
Ph/Fax: 022 461 2755  
Cellular: 082 321 0172  
E-mail: [acrm@wcaccess.co.za](mailto:acrm@wcaccess.co.za)

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## **Executive summary**

A Phase 1 Archaeological Impact Assessment of the proposed development of the Far Hills Hotel Extensions and Hotel Suites near George in the southern Cape has identified no significant impacts to pre-colonial archaeological material that will need to be mitigated, prior to proposed development activities.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background and brief

Far Hills Developments (Pty) Ltd requested that the Agency for Cultural Resource Management conduct a Phase 1 Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) for the proposed development of the existing Far Hills Hotel Extension and Hotel Suites in George in the Southern Cape, in the Western Cape Province.

The proposed project entails an extension and upgrading of the existing Far Hills Country Hotel, comprising small, family-style suites, conferencing facilities, a gym, clubhouse, a retail centre and a cultural village. Associated infrastructure includes parking, roads and services.

Portion 47 of the subject property is currently zoned Resort Zone I (Hotel). Portion 50 of the property is currently zoned Agriculture, and will be rezoned to accommodate the proposed development activities.

The extent of the proposed development (about 18 ha) falls within the requirements for an archaeological impact assessment as required by Section 38 of the South African Heritage Resources Act (No. 25 of 1999).

The aim of the study is to locate and map archaeological sites and remains that may be negatively impacted by the planning, construction and implementation of the proposed project, to assess the significance of the potential impacts and to propose measures to mitigate against the impacts.

A Notification of Intent to Develop (NID) checklist has also been completed by the archaeologist and submitted to Heritage Western Cape (Belcom) for comment.

## 2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The terms of reference for the archaeological study were:

- to determine whether there are likely to be any archaeological sites of significance within the proposed site;
- to identify and map any sites of archaeological significance within the proposed site;
- to assess the sensitivity and conservation significance of archaeological sites within the proposed site;
- to assess the status and significance of any impacts resulting from the proposed development, and
- to identify mitigatory measures to protect and maintain any valuable archaeological sites that may exist within the proposed site

### 3. THE STUDY SITE

A locality map is illustrated in Figure 1.

An aerial photograph of the study site is illustrated in Figure 2.

A site layout plan is illustrated in Figure 3.

The subject property (S° 33 59 445 E° 22 31 982 on map datum wgs 84) is located at the upmarket Far Hills Country Hotel in George (Figures 4 & 5). Access to the site is directly off the N2, about 250 m after the Victoria Bay turnoff.

The majority of the proposed site lies vacant, comprising a mix of grazing lands, kikuyu and buffalo grass on the flat upper slopes alongside the N2, and indigenous veld on the steeper middle slopes. The very steep lower slopes of the property and the river course valley of the Swart River are infested with alien vegetation (Figures 6-13). The Swart River, marking the northern boundary of the property, drains into the Kaaimans River, before discharging into the sea near Wilderness. The property is surrounded by land uses comprising mainly farmland, forestry, residential, small holdings, commercial and resort activities.

The Far Hills farm was purchased in 1948 and a farmhouse and small guest cottage later built. A road was constructed down to the Swart River and a concrete water pump and weir built to utilise the rivers water. Formal gardens, a nursery, strawberry fields, a tea garden and several more cottages were established in 1960. A small dairy was started in 1968. Between 1973 and 1982 the property was expanded and developed by various owners. Extensive upgrading took place in 1998<sup>1</sup>.

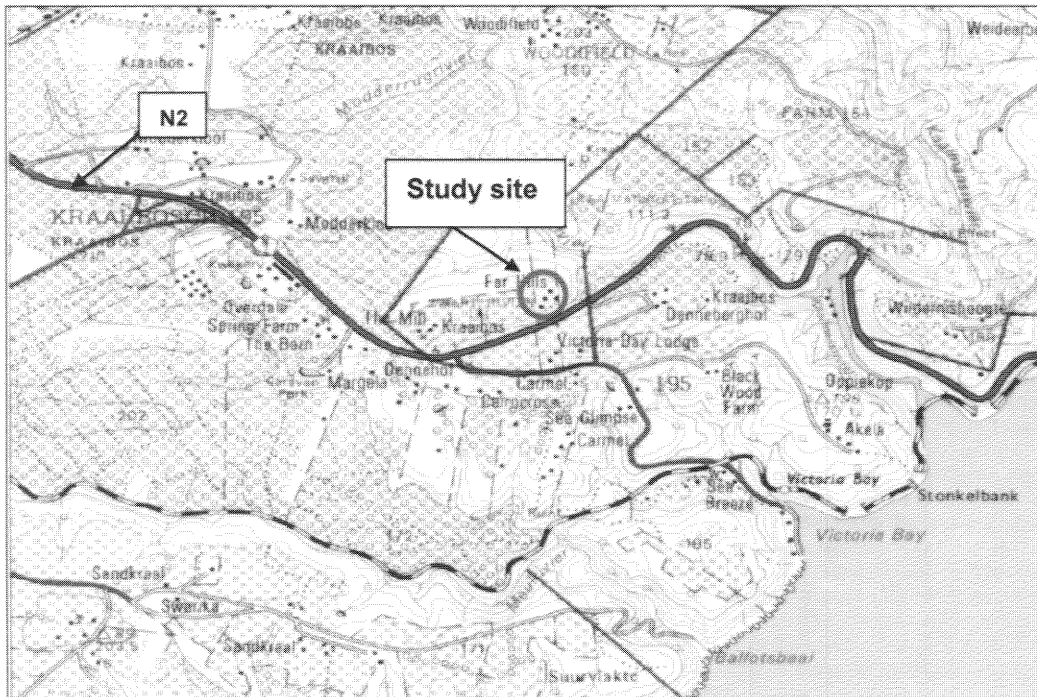


Figure 1. Site locality (DC & 3422BA Wilderness)

<sup>1</sup> Information supplied by Far Hills Country Hotel

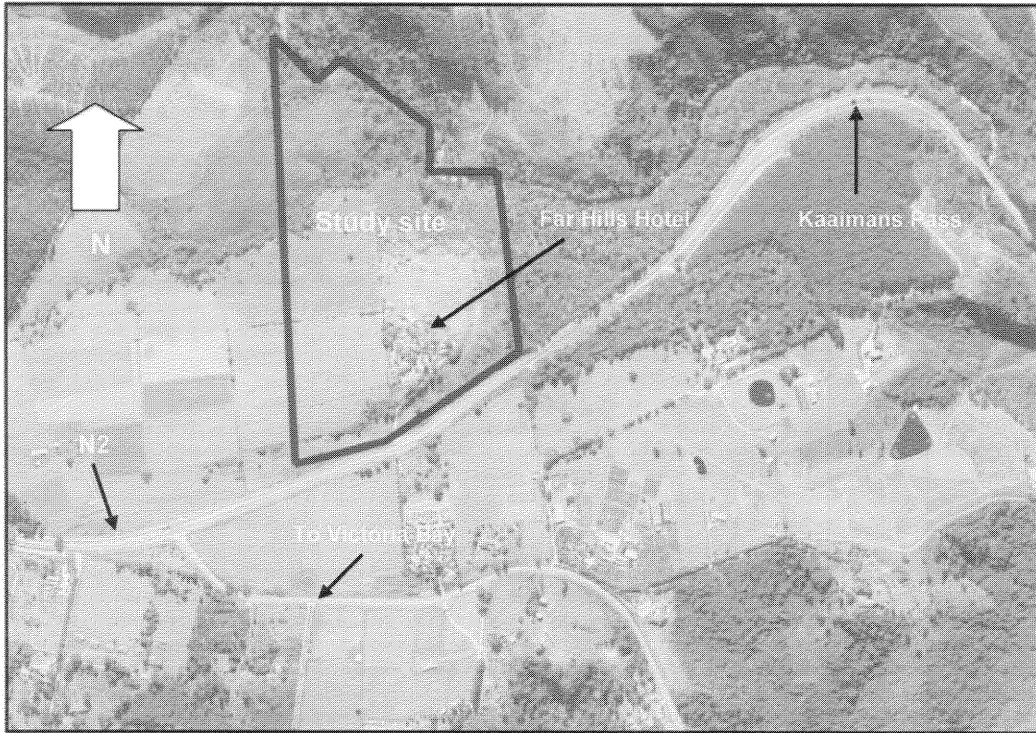


Figure 2. Aerial photograph of the study site

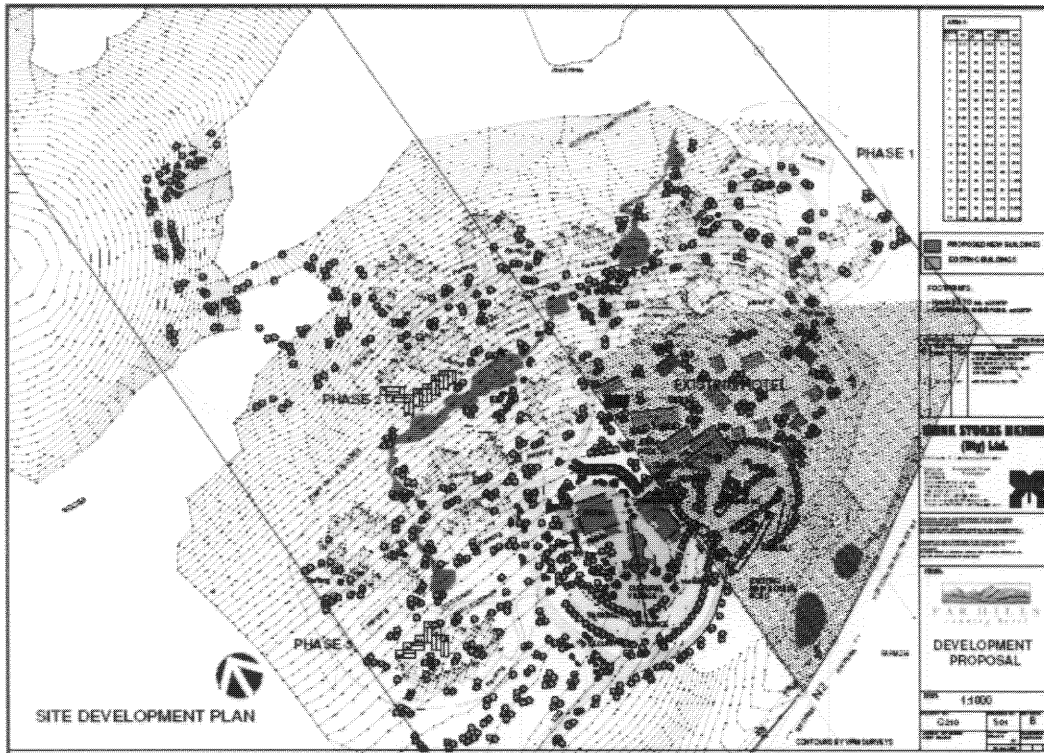


Figure 3. Proposed site development plan

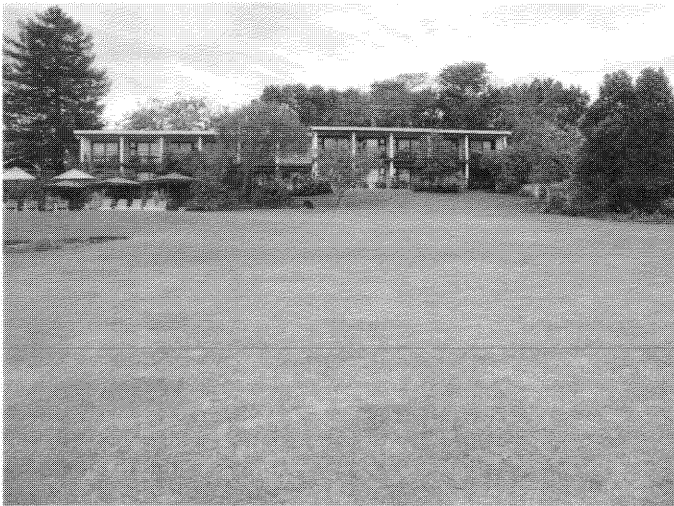




**Figure 4. Far Hills Country Hotel**



**Figure 7. View of the site facing north**



**Figure 5. Far Hills Country Hotel**



**Figure 8. View of the site facing north west**



**Figure 6. View of the site facing north west**



**Figure 9. View of the site facing north east**



**Figure 10. View of the site facing north east**



**Figure 12. view of the site facing north east**



**Figure 11. View of the site facing north east**



**Figure 13. View of the site facing east. Note the N2 to the right of the plate**

## **4. STUDY APPROACH**

### **4.1 Method of survey**

The approach followed in the archaeological study entailed a foot survey of the proposed site.

The site visit and assessment took place on the 4<sup>th</sup> June, 2006.

A desktop study was also undertaken.

### **4.2 Constraints and limitations**

The proposed site is very well vegetated, resulting in extremely poor archaeological visibility on the ground. The upper portion of the proposed site, alongside the N2, comprises grazing lands that are covered in thick, long pioneer grasses and a matt of



kikuyu and buffalo grass. The steep, middle slopes are fully covered in natural Fynbos and Protea species, while the very steep river course valley is infested with alien trees and indigenous vegetation.

#### **4.3 Identification of potential risks**

Few, if any, tools are likely to be exposed on the steep slopes of the property during bulk earthworks and excavations.

It is important to note that no development will take place on the flatter, upper slopes of the property, alongside the N2 (refer to Figure 2).

It is unlikely, but unmarked human burials may be exposed or uncovered during earthmoving operations.

#### **4.4 Results of the desk top study**

Several archaeological studies have recently been conducted in the surrounding area, producing mixed results. Low density scatters of Early Stone Age (ESA) and a few Middle Stone Age (MSA) tools were documented during a study of the proposed Destiny Africa project, situated less than one kilometre south west of the subject property (Kaplan 2006). Three ESA tools were located during a study of the proposed Kraaibosch housing estate, situated less than a kilometre to the west of the study site (Kaplan 2003).

On, or nearer to the coast, however, archaeological sites and remains are far more ubiquitous. For example large numbers of ESA and Middle Stone Age (MSA) tools have been documented at Oubaai (Kaplan 2002), and The Brink (Kaplan 2004), near Herolds Bay. Shell middens have also been recorded on the high cliffs at Oubaai (Kaplan 2002), while Herolds Bay cave is a declared National Monument. Shell middens have also been documented further north at Wilderness (Kaplan 1993).

### **5. LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS**

#### **5.1 The National Heritage Resources Act (Act No. 25 of 1999)**

The National Heritage Resources (NHR) Act requires that "...any development or other activity which will change the character of a site exceeding 5 000m<sup>2</sup>, or the rezoning or change of land use of a site exceeding 10 000 m<sup>2</sup>, requires an archaeological impact assessment"

The relevant sections of the Act are briefly outlined below.

#### **5.2 Archaeology (Section 35 (4))**

Section 35 (4) of the NHR stipulates that no person may, without a permit issued by HWC, destroy, damage, excavate, alter or remove from its original position, or collect, any archaeological material or object.

### **5.3 Burial grounds and graves (Section 36 (3))**

Section 36 (3) of the NHR stipulates that no person may, without a permit issued by the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA), destroy, damage, alter, exhume or remove from its original position or otherwise disturb any grave or burial ground older than 60 years, which is situated outside a formal cemetery administered by a local authority.

## **6. FINDINGS**

One possible ESA quartzite chunk was located in the steep (overgrown) road leading down to the Swart River, from the Hotel.

The remains of the old concrete pump station and weir, built in 1948, was located on the southern bank of the Swart River (Figure 12). The structure is less than 60 years old and is therefore not protected under current heritage legislation.



**Figure 12. Remains of the concrete weir built in 1948**

## **7. IMPACT STATEMENT**

The overall impact of the proposed project on archaeological heritage remains is rated as being **low**.

Few, if any, archaeological remains are likely to be exposed or uncovered on the steep slopes, during earthmoving operations.

The property is not considered to be archaeologically sensitive, vulnerable or threatened.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

The Phase 1 Archaeological Impact Assessment of the proposed development of the Far Hills Hotel Extensions and Hotel Suites in George has identified no significant impacts to pre-colonial archaeological material that will need to be mitigated, prior to the proposed development activities.

- Should any human remains be disturbed, exposed or uncovered during excavations, and earthworks for the proposed project, these should immediately be reported to the South African Heritage Resources Agency (Mrs Mary Leslie (021) 462 4502), or Heritage Western Cape (Mr N. Ndlovu (021) 483 9692). Burial remains should not be disturbed or removed until inspected by the archaeologist.

## 9. REFERENCES

Kaplan, J. 2006. Phase 1 Archaeological Impact Assessment the proposed Destiny Africa Project. Report prepared for Hilland Associates. Agency for Cultural Resource Management.

Kaplan, J. 2004. Phase 1 Archaeological Impact Assessment proposed development The Brink George Southern Cape. Report prepared for Torrbell Holdings. Agency for Cultural Resource Management.

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